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## Y2K

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weeks and even months.

"It is not just the experts who will suffer from the Year 2000 problem," Michael S. Hyatt wrote in his 1998 book *The Millennium Bug: How to Survive the Coming Chaos*. "It will affect every person in every civilized country on earth — including you and me..."

"Whether they are large mainframe computers running in the sterile environment of a corporate Information Systems Department, a combination of client-server systems and personal computers, or embedded chip systems soldered into virtually every appliance and electronic device, computers run the show," Hyatt continued. "What happens if some — or all! — of them crash?"

### Apocalypse when?

Contrary to Hyatt's grim ponderings, Nick Francesco is a bit more optimistic. Francesco, who attends St. Theodore's Church, Gates, is systems administrator for the College of Business at the Rochester Institute of Technology. He also discusses computers on a weekly cable TV program called "756-Talk" on the R News station in Rochester, and is part of the WXXI AM-1370 weekly radio program "Sound Bytes."

Francesco said he has been tracking the Y2K issue for months now through trade journals and other media, and was confident that many companies, utilities and agencies are now Y2K compliant. In other words, they've fixed the bugs in their systems, and their computers will probably not crash on Jan. 1.

"I really don't think it's time to move to Montana with guns and gold," Francesco said.

On the other hand, Francesco noted



while he is not as concerned with what might happen in the United States Jan. 1, he is concerned about nations that aren't up to speed with Y2K compliance. Indeed, according to a number of sources, such nuclear powers as Russia and China are far behind the United States and other Western nations when it comes to dealing with Y2K problems.

And some enemies of the United States might see Jan. 1 as the perfect time to strike, he noted.

"That's what keeps me up at night," Francesco said. "Anybody could launch a missile at midnight and declare it was an 'accident.'"

On the other hand, he said, missile codes generally aren't date-sensitive, so a real accidental launching seems unlikely. For that matter, Francesco downplayed any potential crises associated with the Y2K bug, comparing such events to severe ice storms that would disable society for a few weeks. He said he's bought a gas

generator, saved some extra cash, and plans to store up a couple weeks' worth of canned goods in case of emergencies.

"I have a feeling that it's not going to be as bad as it's been made out to be, and that's what I'm preparing for," he said.

Benjamin C. Dragon, a computer analyst for Lockheed Martin in Owego, is even more optimistic than Francesco. Dragon, who serves as volunteer technology coordinator at St. Patrick's School in Owego, said that many computers don't depend on reading dates in order to function.

"I don't think the bugs out there are as severe as people are making it out to be," he said.

He also dismissed calls for emergency preparedness in the wake of possible Y2K-related problems in the country.

"I'm not doing anything along those lines, and I have no plans to do so," he said.

### Bug-killers

Joan Zaia, the Diocese of Rochester's director of information technology, said she knows of at least 35 parishes and 29 diocesan schools whose computers have been upgraded or replaced with diocesan funding and/or assistance. These computers are now Y2K compliant, she said. One such parish that is ready for Jan. 1 is St. Hyacinth in Auburn.

"We purchased a whole new system through the diocese," said parish secretary and bookkeeper Helen Tolomay. "I think we're ready (for Y2K)."

Zaia added that the diocese had been upgrading its own computers and software at the Pastoral Center for well over a year now, and should be able to roll over to 2000 without any major problems.

"We've tested enough things to say we know our data is safe," she said.

Similarly, the *Catholic Courier* talked to several diocesan social-service institu-

tions whose representatives were confident that most, if not all, of their computers would be Y2K compliant long before Jan. 1. Those institutions include Catholic Family Center in Rochester, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes, Catholic Charities of Livingston County and St. Joseph's Hospital in Elmira. Unity Health System in Rochester, an alliance of St. Mary's and Park Ridge hospitals, is also getting ready.

Additionally, both Unity and St. Joseph's representatives said their hospitals had made contingency plans to keep medical equipment going in case of any Y2K-related breakdowns. Indeed, Warren Hern, Unity's executive vice president and chief financial officer, said hospitals are always prepared for the worst.

"This is one of many disaster scenarios that hospitals always have provided for," he said.

### What if ...

But what if something does go wrong Jan. 1? Who is getting ready for possible power outages, food shortages and medical crises?

It's time to prepare, according to Tom Ferraro, executive director of Foodlink, a not-for-profit clearinghouse that provides food and other resources to numerous food pantries, soup kitchens and other agencies in the counties of Allegany, Genesee, Monroe, Ontario, Wayne and Yates. Thirty of the organizations are affiliated with the Catholic Church.

Ferraro said Foodlink recently surveyed its affiliated agencies and found that few of them had any kind of contingency plan in case they're overloaded with food requests come Jan. 1 and beyond. Hence, Ferraro said Foodlink and several of its affiliate agencies have begun working on a plan to tackle Y2K-related shortages.

"What we have found is that food has been generally ignored in all emergency plans," Ferraro said.

Meanwhile, Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes plans to stock extra food for its community lunch program, as well as keep on hand vouchers for such items as gas to help people who may need them come Jan. 1, according to Joan Lynch, the agency's accountant.

For that matter, Mark J. Dworsky, director of clinical engineering/communications at St. Joseph's Hospital, Elmira, has done a number of radio and TV spots to alert the public to his hospital's Y2K preparations. Education and preparation are the keys to soothing public fears and anxieties about Y2K, he noted.

"I'm thinking that people are paying so much attention to (Y2K) that people are addressing the issues so that it won't be as big a problem as people think it might be," he said.

## If you want to be ready Jan. 1, here's some help

Whether or not you believe chaos will ensue on Jan. 1, 2000, many experts on the Y2K computer bug problem say it's best to be prepared just in case something does happen. Some tips compiled from a variety of Y2K sources:

- Make a list of all the important documents you need, and then obtain or make hard copies of those documents.
- Store between one week and one month's worth of water and food supplies. Churches should do the same to help those who are caught empty-handed.

- Bone up on basic emergency medical knowledge.
- Save a few hundred dollars cash in case you won't be able to use your credit cards or in case the issuance of checks is interrupted. Some experts even advise buying some hard money — silver, gold and platinum.
- Make sure you have adequate winter clothing on hand.
- Buy a generator, and a camp stove for cooking.
- Keep your car's gas tank full.
- Get to know your neighbors. You can work with them in case of emergencies, and share the burdens of a crisis.

- Find out how to dig an outhouse in case you are unable to use your toilet for an extended period of time.
- Keep a supply of candles and/or battery-operated lights.

For more information on Y2K preparedness, you can visit these Web sites:

- [www.nsti.com](http://www.nsti.com) (provides a free online program to check a computer's hardware; Macintosh computers newer than Apple II are compliant).
- [www.redcross.com](http://www.redcross.com)
- [www.catholic2000.com](http://www.catholic2000.com)
- [www.willitwork.com](http://www.willitwork.com)
- [www.sec.com](http://www.sec.com)

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